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ABSTRACT

Directions for college teaching were assessed, based on ratings of 10 "megatrends" identified by John Naisbitt. The study questionnaire summarized the 10 megatrends and provided scales for rating the probability of the trends occurring and their potential impact. Responses were obtained from Marquette University faculty of the College of Business Administration, business educators affiliated with the Association of Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, and training and development professionals of the American Society for Training and Development. Each study group estimated the probability of the trend occurring, using a scale of 0 to 100 percent. Using a six-point scale, respondents also rated the impact of each megatrend for their field (teaching business administration, training and development, and simulation and experiential learning). Naisbitt's megatrends involve shifts to: an information society, high technology and high touch (human response), a world economy, long-term planning, decentralization, self-help, participatory democracy, networking, North to South, and multiple options. Based on the survey responses, suggested impacts on training and higher education are identified for each megatrend, along with data showing agreement and disagreement for each megatrend. (SW)

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"MEGATRENDS" FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Directions for the Future of College Teaching

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Directions for the Future of College Teaching

INTRODUCTION

The society of the 1980's and 1990's is considered one where changes in economic, social, personal, and educational forces are considered an ever increasing and more dominant characteristic of our lives [3,4]. The professional field of higher education is logically affected by these changes. Professionals in higher education must continue to view themselves as progressive individuals with a focus on long range, strategic planning. This planning process results in action plans that reflect an awareness of environmental opportunities and threats.

An environmental scan can be based on a number of different perspectives. John Naisbitt's best selling text, MEGATRENDS [1], identifies one possible set of predictions which could serve as the basis for an environmental scan in the field of higher education. Naisbitt's analysis of articles and news bits from hundreds of newspapers around the country provides the basis for his ten "Megatrends." Naisbitt makes it clear that his predictions are not guaranteed forecasts of the future. They are apparent trends, conclusions based on the data he has collected. Naisbitt makes it clear that his "Megatrends" are open to debate and modification. They are a format which will lead to a critical evaluation of environmental issues.

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A Research Study

A questionnaire containing a summary of the ten "Megatrends" and an assessment of the probability (0-100%) of the trends occurring and their potential impact (1=low,6=high) was developed.

The "Megatrends" probability impact analysis was used with three professional groups in the general areas of teaching, learning, and management. The survey was used with the College of Business Administration faculty of Marquette University as part of its long range strategic planning process. A second study was done with a national group of business educators. The Association for Business Simulation and Experiential Learning (ABSEL) is an group of educators/consultants who develop computer simulations and structured exercises which are used in both academic and organizational environments. A third study was conducted among training and development professionals of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD).

While these three groups are not similar, there are similarities which would allow for a comparison of the results. Tables 1 and 2 present the probability and impact ratings for the three groups. Significant differences based on a oneway analysis of variance are indicated.

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Table 1

Higher Education "Megatrends" Summary

MEGATREND	PROBABILITY	IMPACT
We are in a "megashift" from an industrial to an information based society.	75.9	5.33
For every high-technology action, there is a "high-touch" reaction, or the technology will be rejected.	61.5	4.08
Our economy is becoming part of a global structure moving away from isolation and national self-sufficiency. As a result, we will no longer be the world's dominant force.	66.8	4.33
U.S. corporate managers are beginning to think about the long term rather than the next quarter.	49.1	3.91
Our centralized structures are crumbling. We are decentralizing and growing stronger from the bottom up.	50.1	3.92
We are reclaiming our traditional sense of self-reliance after four decades of looking to institutions for help.	50.8	3.66
Citizens, workers, and consumers are demanding and getting a greater voice in government, business, and the marketplace.	57.5	4.30
We are moving from hierarchies to networking; the computer is smashing the pyramid.	55.3	4.32
The North-South shift in the United States is real and irreversible for the foreseeable future.	61.7	3.91
We no longer live in an either/or, chocolate or vanilla world; people have demanded and are getting a multitude of choices.	68.8	4.56

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Table 2

"Megatrends" Comparative Ratings

	PROBABILITY			IMPACT		
	ASTD	ABSEL	M.U.	ASTD	ABSEL	M.U.
Information [1,2]	82.6	77.4	67.6	5.58	5.23	5.18
High Touch [1,2]	66.9	63.6	54.0	4.39	4.15	3.70
Global Economy [1]	72.3	67.9	60.2	4.39	4.38	4.23
Long Term [2]	53.2	49.7	44.3	4.44	3.54	3.74
Decentralization [1]	58.5	48.0	43.9	4.24	3.91	3.62
Self-Reliance [1,2]	61.3	50.8	40.2	4.34	3.37	3.26
Greater Voice	61.0	58.8	52.8	4.48	4.03	4.04
Networking [1,2]	62.7	59.1	44.2	4.52	4.59	3.84
North-South [2]	58.7	67.7	58.7	3.50	3.68	4.56
Choices [1,2]	80.0	73.7	52.6	5.06	4.86	3.76

[1] Significant Differences (<.10) exist among groups for Probability ratings.

[2] Significant Differences (<.10) exist among groups for Impact ratings.

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The probability ratings can easily be compared because of the similarity of the task. Each group was instructed to estimate the probability of the trend occurring, using a scale of 0 to 100%. This estimate was not based on the environment of the specific group. The impact analysis was specific, however, to the group being surveyed. The ASTD group was estimating the impact of the trend on the field of training and development; the ABSEL group was estimating the impact on simulation and experiential learning; and the Marquette University group was estimating the impact on teaching in business administration (in a particular university setting). The impact ratings used a six point scale:

1 = Low impact, narrow focus
2 = Low impact, broad focus
3 = Average impact, narrow focus
4 = Average impact, broad focus
5 = High impact, narrow focus
6 = High impact, broad focus

The data demonstrate both agreement and disagreement, for each of the ten "Megatrends", on both the probability and impact ratings. A detailed summary for each "Megatrend" is presented in Exhibits 1 to 10. The focus is on an interpretation of the specific impacts identified. Additional statistical information, means, ranges, and standard deviations, are also presented.

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Megatrend #1

WE ARE IN A "MEGASHIFT" FROM AN INDUSTRIAL TO AN INFORMATION BASED SOCIETY.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 75.9	Mean: 5.33
Range: 30-100	Range: 4-6
Std. Dev.: 16.19	Std. Dev.: .71

IMPACTS

Training

More computer assisted training and self-directed learning.

Need to train everyone how to use a computer, computer literacy.

More emphasis on "broad-based" or "gray area" training; less "either-or" and "yes-no" training.

How to train "information" managers and a work force where employees are more knowledgeable than managers.

Higher education professionals will need even more to be "resource" specialists.

Need for high tech training. Need for basic communication skills, speaking and writing.

Training focusing on data, information, decision-making, and planning.

More computer-based training for adult education and retraining.

Higher Education

Expand breadth of simulations to include or serve a broader set of disciplines like Political Science and Public Administration.

More use of computers for games in courses and to analyze data gathered in courses and to give feedback to students on their performance.

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Megatrend #2

FOR EVERY HIGH-TECHNOLOGY ACTION, THERE IS A HIGH-TOUCH REACTION OR THE TECHNOLOGY WILL BE REJECTED.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 61.5	Mean: 4.08
Range: 10-90	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 19.47	Std. Dev.: 1.24

IMPACTS

Training

There will be an increased need to emphasize human relations factors in the work force.

Greater need for human resource management and interpersonal skills training.

More participative interactive training sessions; less tolerance for lecture "how to."

The need to develop programs on dealing with change to accompany changes in technology.

Increased need for human relations training to compensate for increased pressures between individuals.

Help others change values and beliefs toward high-technology, gaining acceptance of new learning delivery systems.

Emphasis on "quality of worklife"; organization development programs.

Higher Education

Demand for more interpersonal competence.

Qualitative approaches balancing out quantitative emphasis.

Incorporation of personal development as an objective in more learning exercises.

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Megatrend #3

OUR ECONOMY IS BECOMING PART OF A GLOBAL STRUCTURE, MOVING AWAY FROM ISOLATION AND NATIONAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY. AS A RESULT, WE WILL NO LONGER BE THE WORLD'S DOMINANT FORCE.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 66.8	Mean: 4.33
Range: 20-100	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 21.38	Std. Dev.: 1.37

IMPACTS

Training

Cultural training and language skill development will be important.

More integration of thoughts and other cultures which will definitely impact on values and systems.

More multi-lingual training required; more employees will have to be multi-lingual.

Developing training programs and interventions that will strengthen people's ability to think in a larger (global) framework.

Cross-cultural training will be vital. We'll all have to learn to overcome our prejudices and learn to focus in the practical issues of humanism and goal orientation.

Global sharing of training skills and techniques. Americans are "shocked" to learn the degree to which our philosophies and approaches are culture bound.

Higher Education

Activities need to be designed so that students are exposed to a multi-cultural dimension.

More emphasis on material having an international emphasis.

A greater need for a specialized type of information training.

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Megatrend #4

U.S. CORPORATE MANAGERS ARE BEGINNING TO THINK ABOUT THE LONG TERM RATHER THAN THE NEXT QUARTER.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 49.1	Mean: 3.91
Range: 0-100	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 23.45	Std. Dev.: 1.40

IMPACTS

Training

Inclusion of Higher education in initial corporate planning.

Trainers will need to know more about the use of trends, conducting environmental scans, futuring, etc.

No change -- unfortunately we'll still be a voice crying in the wilderness.

"Management training" and new economic structures are needed to make it worthwhile to commit resources beyond one or two quarters.

Higher Education

Long term exercises, extending beyond the traditional semester.

Courses that stress strategic long range planning.

Go to more long term thinking and structure simulations and classes longer than single semesters.

Could lead to more complete and more realistic approaches to thinking and extensive use of simulations.

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Megatrend #5

OUR CENTRALIZED STRUCTURES ARE CRUMBLING. WE ARE DECENTRALIZING GROWING STRONGER FROM THE BOTTOM UP.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 50.1	Mean: 3.92
Range: 10-100	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 21.10	Std. Dev.: 1.26

IMPACTS

Training

Greater need for management skills development, especially in areas of group dynamics and participative approaches.

The focus of an organization on greater community and state involvement in order to effectively lobby for favorable local laws. This means more effective public speaking skills for managers who represent their organization in the community.

Self initiative in training, career development.

Need to develop new skills and competencies to successfully function in a decentralized organization. Need to examine how to help employees learn new behaviors and norms that come from structural change.

Training would become more diversified and probably conducted more at the request of individuals and work group leaders instead of management.

Greater involvement and participation in local concerns; increased public and community relations responsibilities.

Higher Education

We must educate our students to be change agents, ready to accept a dynamic environment.

More stress on individual/interpersonal problems in coping with change.

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Megatrend #6

WE ARE RECLAIMING OUR TRADITIONAL SENSE OF SELF-RELIANCE, AFTER FOUR DECADES OF LOOKING TO INSTITUTIONS FOR HELP.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 50.8	Mean: 3.66
Range: 20-100	Range: 2-6
Std. Dev.: 22.80	Std. Dev.: 1.27

IMPACTS

Training

Social service agencies will need more training to cope with self-sufficiency.

Teaching others to accept individual responsibility.

Trainers will trend away from behavioral orientation toward more humanistic orientation.

More emphasis on self-directed learning.

More continuing education; health and wellness have become part of the "educational industry" rather than the health industry.

Higher education will probably have to "fill in" all of the educational gaps these poor kids will have.

Higher Education

Meaningful decision-making; when do you know you have enough information to make a decision -- related to the degree of self-reliance sought.

Move toward individual rather than group analysis.

Need to teach participative skills, responsibilities, and commitment.

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Megatrend #7

CITIZENS, WORKERS, AND CONSUMERS ARE DEMANDING AND GETTING A GREATER VOICE IN GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, AND THE MARKETPLACE.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 57.5	Mean: 4.30
Range: 10-100	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 23.24	Std. Dev.: 1.53

IMPACTS

Training

More input and monitoring from outside the organization of what higher education programs are offered.

Organizations are finding themselves coping with greater public demands and media exposure.

Greater rejection of poorly planned and executed training.

This has tremendous impact for communication/interpersonal skills training. If people want a "voice" they need to know how to use it.

Greater demand for training in leadership skills, how to gain and maintain power, negotiation skills, etc.

Creates a greater diversity of education and topics. Our schools are not putting out trainers either in numbers or capabilities to handle this. Many universities look at HRD and Education as lower status departments.

Higher Education

Greater emphasis on social impact of decisions.

Simulations about social issues and political activism.

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Megatrend #8

WE ARE MOVING FROM HIERARCHIES TO NETWORKING,
THE COMPUTER IS SMASHING THE PYRAMID.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 55.3	Mean: 4.32
Range: 10-100	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 23.41	Std. Dev.: 1.44

IMPACTS

Training

More emphasis on how to work with people instead of for them. Less training on the rules and more on dealing with people.

Computer literacy will be imperative and the older workers will need help with skill levels and acceptance.

This is particularly true in job hunting skills, career development, and upward mobility training. Support groups are vital to development and we need to learn to use them more through training.

Personal networking skill training needs to be offered to the working class.

Need to train people in collaborative approaches to working and living, especially with increased isolation due to computers.

Higher Education

Teach how to design and understand networks! Develop networking competencies.

Information monitoring skills must be build into teaching materials.

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Megatrend #9

THE NORTH-SOUTH SHIFT IN THE UNITED STATES IS REAL AND IRREVERSIBLE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 61.7	Mean: 3.91
Range: 0-100	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 26.55	Std. Dev.: 1.50

IMPACTS

Training

Northern areas must learn to adapt to this trend; use of automated equipment and facilities.

Don't agree -- Northeast is still the mecca for education.

Those moving south must be oriented to a specific culture where many stereotypic biases are not true but where traditional values are still upheld. A different kind of cross cultural training is needed.

Increased demand to community and cultural education.

Greater labor competition, more retraining, break up of present dominant industries.

Higher Education

Emphasis on radical change based on crisis. Structural conflict and contradiction might become key concepts for understanding change, through different disciplines.

Input energy, relocation, labor force characteristics, consumer movement, state regulations into decision-making.

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Megatrend #10

WE NO LONGER LIVE IN AN EITHER/OR, CHOCOLATE-OR-VANILLA WORLD, PEOPLE HAVE DEMANDED AND ARE GETTING A MULTITUDE OF CHOICES.

Probability of Occurrence	Degree of Impact
Mean: 68.8	Mean: 4.56
Range: 20-100	Range: 1-6
Std. Dev.: 19.49	Std. Dev.: 1.25

IMPACTS

Training

Strategy -- teaching people to THINK!

Demands for higher education programs to be based on individual needs rather than larger group needs, more specific tailoring of programs.

Many individuals are not sophisticated about making choices. They will need help with problem solving and decision making skills.

Need for greater availability of specifically tailored instruction. Greater use of computer based instruction.

Development of a variety of training techniques and styles to meet individual needs of trainees.

Employees will choose their learning from a "cafeteria" rather than a set curriculum.

Higher Education

Teaching people how to deal with ambiguity.

Go into cafeteria style grading and experiment more with optional classroom activities that meet different needs of different students.

Need to teach more complex decision-making methods, including highly subjective or personal critieria.

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While there is widespread disagreement about some of the "Megatrends", both in terms of the probability of their occurrence and their impact, there is also substantial support for actions which must occur for the field of higher education to continue taking an active role in human development.

Professionals in higher education must continue to take a strong role in the action planning that is associated with the assessment of impacts. Directions are not enough; action planning and results will be the real determinants of the profession's ability to deal with the future. Professionals in higher education need to develop two of the key concepts from In Search of Excellence [2]. Communication about issues must be increased and a "bias for action" must be developed that causes the profession to take steps that deal directly with those "Megatrends" that are going to impact significantly on college teaching.

Bias for Action

The "bias for action," follows the analysis of their probability and impact. From the individual responses, there are proposed actions which would likely receive substantial support from the profession. Individual actions are indicated for the "Megatrends." However, there are four strong issues that seem common to this entire project.

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Action Call: There is a substantial need for new educational programs. Despite the recognized volume of educational programs, there were widespread demands for new programs throughout the "Megatrend" analysis. For every trend, individual responses were recorded that asked for and identified specific programs that are not currently available. Program needs were identified in cultural issues, communication skills, computer literacy, human relations, planning, decision-making, career development, and leadership skills. These programs will have new content, new approaches, and be delivered using the new technologies.

Action Call: There is a major need for improved communication about what education does and how to do it. The wealth of educational programs currently available makes the first "action call" hard to accept. The number of programs available for some of these topics is substantial. Despite this reality, there is substantial support among the survey respondents that these programs will not meet the demands of the future. Alternatively, there is some evidence that professionals face difficult decisions in identifying the appropriate program when faced with the "multitude of choices."

Action Call: There is a need for more programs that effectively use the principles of self-directed learning and self-choice

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about what is learned. There was a substantial reaction throughout the research that there will be more focus on identification of individual learning needs and individualized approaches, often computer-based, to learning. While the term is common in the compensation area, the idea of "cafeteria" education may be new, and frightening, to many. It will require a radically new approach to education in some institutions.

Action Call: There is a need for new teaching methods. This is a surprising outcome of the research. An assessment of teaching techniques shows there are teaching approaches for almost any subject and any audience. Yet the respondents in this research seem to be generally concerned about new ways of presenting content. There was substantial concern over the ability of the computer to become a major delivery vehicle for higher education. The problems of successful computer-assisted instruction and the continuing need for personal, instructor contact appear to be a call for new approaches. While ideas were generated for specific actions in other areas, this call for action appears to be a hope for some yet-to-be discovered teaching strategy.

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SUMMARY

The directions for higher education and college teaching identified above are meant to be clearly one interpretation of the results of this research project. In reality, it is the organization itself and the individual professionals which will identify and decide, by their actions, the directions the field of higher education will take as a result of the "Megatrends." The materials presented here are an attempt to increase the amount of information available to individuals facing these trends and focus on the "bias for action" that is necessary to continue leadership in the field of higher education.

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[1] Naisbitt, John. Megatrends. New York: Warner Books, 1982.

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[4] Toffler, Alvin. Future Shock. New York: Bantam Books, 1971.

Author's Note: Additional results from the individual surveys, including a complete set a statistical data, the analysis of variance, score distributions, etc., are available from the author upon request. Copies of all comments are also available.

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